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We may go a step further and say that if it is the wife who secures the family economically and religiously, the family will be respected by others in proportion to the number of mothers it has. In a word, the *social* status of the family depends on the economic and religious status, and these in turn depend very much on the number of wives. Doubtless, investment in wives is the best investment of any North Caucasian family.

Polygyny being part and parcel of the family organization of the North Caucasian peoples, we must, therefore, in seeking the origin of the institution, go back beyond Islamic times, beyond Christian and Avestic times, and perhaps beyond historical times. North Caucasian polygyny was born when the North Caucasian family organization was born.

A corollary to the question regarding the origin of polygyny in North Caucasia is the enquiry into the motives for polygynous unions. The sexual factor has relatively little significance. Not lust, not desire to have a young wife, not a surplus of women, but craving for a large family, for many labourers, for economic and religious prepetuation of the family, for the rise in social prestige—these are the motives that generally induce a man to marry a second wife.

(3) A glance at Table 5 under the columns "Usually restricted to bigyny" and "Enjoyed by rich alone" will reveal that plural marriages among the North Caucasian peoples and their neighbours are usually cases of *bigamy* and that polygyny is more the exception than the rule. This state of affairs would seem to contradict what we have just said about the importance of polygyny. Why is this all-important institution practiced only by a *few* and generally *limited* to one and at the most two additional wives? Why this difference in theory and practice? This fact is all the more striking because all our North Caucasian peoples are Mohammedans and according to the Koran, iv. 3 and Islamic tradition everyone is entitled to have up to four wives.

The first reason, and no doubt, the most important one is that Nature herself prevents universal polygyny. The relative number of males and females is dictated by a biological law, the sex ratio rarely exceeding 100:110 in favour of either sex.[33] Usually the ratio is 106 males to 100 females, but, we must remember, child mortality is far greater among boys than girls, so that in the long run the ratio of marriageable persons is about 100:100.[34] Nowhere in the world does it approximate a 1:2 ratio, which would be necessary to make bigyny a general practice.[35]

Theoretically speaking, a surplus of women could result in the Caucasus from blood-feuds, dangerous occupations, infanticide, and other major disturbances affecting the *male* population alone. Such a preponderance of female sex would necessitate many of them remaining unmarried or several women would be obliged to marry one man. But are there such major disturbances affecting the sex ratio in the Caucasus? Since the Soviet government prohibits polygyny and in recent decades polygyny has become extremely rare, it would seem much

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[33] R. H. Lowie, *An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, (New York, 1947), p. 243.

[34] Günther, *Formen und Urgeschichte der Ehe*, p. 100.

[35] R. H. Lowie, *Social Organization*, p. 113.

583 to assume the character of a dowry, as it had tended much earlier in Daghestan. A bitter struggle is going on between ancient *adats*, the *šarī'a*, and Russian laws.

(3) *Kalym* (even in recent times) is generally high.

[585] (4) Everywhere except among the Ingiloi and the Chechens of Nazran (*supra*, pp. 84, 86) the *kalym* and *kebin* are much higher for a virgin than a non-virgin. Virginity therefore is one of the most important factors in determining the amount of bride wealth.

[614] (5) Generally the family or a larger social group as the sib or *tleush* provide the necessary bride wealth. The groom never has to amass the *kalym* [581] himself, another fact clearly showing that mating is not a private affair.

(6) The *kebin* is found in all North Caucasia and Mohammedan neighbourhood.

● [554] (7) Everywhere the social status of the partners is an important factor in determining the amount of *kalym* and *kebin*.[1]

The uniform evolution of the North Caucasian bride purchase is indeed striking. Originally all peoples of North Caucasus seem to have had actual bride purchase: the bride was actually sold and considered as a chattel. Then the bride-price began to lose its character of a purchase, a development contemporaneous with the spread of Islamism and Russian influence. Mohammedanism does not recognize bride purchase as such:[53] it recommends a bridal gift and prescribes the *kebin (mahr)* instead. The Russian Military Government in pre-Soviet times regarded bride purchase as a serious "abuse" and according to a decision of 1857 one third of the bride-price was to become the property of the bride as a form of social security.[54] Later the Soviet Government contributed its share in modifying the custom especially through industrialization, as we have seen is the case of the Cherkess living in the larger cities.[55]

583 554 That social rank should play such an imporant part in determing the amount of bride wealth (whether bride price, gifts or *kebin*) is quite natural, universal and in full accord with Islamic law.[56] In fact, according to Mohammedan teaching, the *wali mujbir* loses his right to marry his daughter or granddaughter against her will if the bride wealth does not correspond to the girl's social rank.[57]

Nowhere in the Caucasus has bride purchase been considered as something humiliating or degrading. After all, even the Cherkess princesses were purchased. The bride wealth corresponded to the social status and therefore added dignity to the purchase. Moreover, the higher the price the greater the social respect

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[53] Juynboll, *op. cit.*, p. 190. The *mahr* is also called *sakâk* in Islamic law.
[54] A. Dirr, AGKB, p. 124.
[55] *Supra*, p. 83.
[56] Juynboll, *op. cit.*, p. 215.
[57] *ibid.*

1 [i.e., bride-price and bride's security against divorce—Analyst]

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for the family accruing from such a purchase. And as anywhere else in the world, only *good* brides were bought. The fact that a girl was purchased was a kind of flattery and even a definite proof of her good standing. The "price-tag" remained attached to her for the rest of her life, and in it she could find sufficient food for her vanity and self-complacency.

Kebin occupies a middle position between an actual bride-price and a dowry. Like a dowry it aims at being a security for the bride's future, and like the dowry it is given to the *bride* and not to her family. On the other hand, it resembles the bride-price in as much as it is paid by the *groom's* family, it is accompanied with much bargaining, and, finally, the amount is determined according to the same standards as the bride-price.

We have said above that through the influence of Russian and Islamic law bride purchase has become more and more like a guarantee against divorce or security in case of widowhood. However, we did not wish to say that before the coming of Islamism or of the Russians there was no economic security given to the bride. A less developed and relatively small dowry or *kebin* could have existed in the Caucasus long before Islamic *mahr* "received full approbation from Allah." We know that, independently of Islamism, the position of the female sex was greatly improved by a dowry, e. g., among the Japanese, Chinese, Ancient Germans, Kelts, and Babylonians. The Romans and the Greeks regarded a marriage without a dowry practically as concubinage.[58] If it could exist among these peoples independently of Mohammed, it could have existed in the Caucasus independently of Islamism as well. In fact we find a kind of dowry in North Caucasus in the practical wedding gifts given to the bride by her family.[59] Of course, a large dowry is out of place in such a strongly exogamous society as we find in the greater part of North Caucasia, for the family property must remain within the family. On the other hand, from our description of the wedding customs we shall be able to observe the relatively important rôle these gifts play in the endogamous part of North Caucasus.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that bride purchase in the strict sense of the word fits into the Caucasian economic form of life quite well. Though bride wealth is found equally in mother-right and father-right societies, bride purchase in the strict sense is an institution found almost exclusively in pastoral societies or in societies that have been greatly influenced by pastoral peoples, or that have passed through pastoral stages, such as we find in Africa, Asia, and Europe. We do not find the bride-*price* in Australia, Melanesia, Polynesia or in America.[60]

§ 2. BY CAPTURE

"Bride capture" is just as much a blanket term as "bride purchase." Here too we must distinguish between genuine bride capture and various forms

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[58] Schmidt-Koppers, *Völker und Kulturen*, p. 310.

[59] Amirov, "Sredi gorcev severnago Dagestana," SSKG, VII (1873), p. 30 f.

[60] R. Briffault, *op. cit.*, II, p. 218; Westermarck, *History of Marriage*, II (1925), pp. 278 ff.